

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-05 NSCE-00 INRE-00 SSO-00
ACDA-12 CIAE-00 INR-10 IO-13 L-03 NSAE-00 EB-08
NRC-05 OES-07 SOE-02 DODE-00 DOE-11 SS-15 SP-02
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9908
INFO RUSBAY AMCONSUL BOMBAY IMMEDIATE 5196

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: TECH, ENGR, IN
SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER DESAI'S LOK SABHA STATEMENT
ON STORAGE AT TARAPUR

REF: NEW DELHI 3301

1. WE HAVE GONE OVER THE TRANSCRIPT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY EXCHANGE ON THE STORAGE OF FUEL AT TARAPUR. IT SEEMS REASONABLY CLEAR TO US THAT THE SAMACHAR ACCOUNT OF THE EXCHANGE DISTORTED WHAT THE PRIME MINISTER SAID, LARGELY BECAUSE THE PM'S ANSWER TO AN MP'S QUESTION WAS ITSELF CONFUSING AND NON-RESPONSIVE.

2. THE PM WAS ASKED IN A QUESTION SUBMITTED IN ADVANCE FOR ORAL REPLY "WHETHER THE OUTPUT IN TARAPUR ATOMIC PLANT WAS REDUCED TO 70 PER CENT OF THE DESIGNED CAPACITY DURING THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF 1977-78 BECAUSE OF DIFFICULTIES IN STORING MORE SPENT-FUEL RODS IN THE EXISTING POOL." HE REPLIED THAT THIS WAS THE CASE, AND THAT REDUCTION IN OUTPUT BECAME NECESSARY ON THIS ACCOUNT IN THE SECOND HALF OF 1977-78. REPLYING TO A SUPPLEMENTARY
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QUESTION, HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE QUESTION OF HOW TO HANDLE THE FUEL STORAGE PROBLEM IS A QUESTION WHICH CAN BE SOLVED ONLY BY AN AGREEMENT WITH THE US. "WE ARE NEGOTIATING IT ALL THE WHILE. BUT IN VIEW OF THEIR ATTITUDE, WE HAVE TO BE CAREFUL ALSO AND WE HAVE GOT TO SEE WHAT BEST WAY WE CAN DO IT. WE ARE TRYING TO FIND OUT WHAT METHOD WE CAN USE TO SEE THAT WE GET OUT OF THIS

IMPASSE. BUT AT PRESENT WE ARE GETTING SOMETHING MORE AND PERHAPS WE MAY HOPE TO SOLVE IT THAT WAY. IF NOT, WE HAVE TO FIND OUT ANOTHER WAY.

3. THE CONFUSION WAS INTRODUCED BY ANOTHER SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION. DESAI WAS AKSED WHETHER THE QUESTIONS OF STORING THE SPENT FUEL RODS WAS A PARTY OF THE CONTRACT WHICH WAS AGREED UPON BETWEEN THE GOI AND THE USG AND, IF SO, WHETHER THE STORAGE PROBLEM HAS BEEN CREATED BECAUSE OF THE VIOLATION OF THE AGREEMENT BY THE US. UNFORTUANTELY, FOR THE PURPOSES OF CLARITY, THE QUESTONER THEN REFERRED TO THE STATEMENTS MADE BY THE PM AND OTHER GOI OFFICIALS ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF CLOSING DOWN THE TARPUR PLANT. DESIA'S REPLY WAS THAT HE COULD UNDERSTAND THE MEMBER'S AXIETY ABOUT THE VIOLATION OF THE AGREEMENT BY THE US. HE AGREED THAT IT WAS A VIOLATION. BUT WHAT HE SEEMED TO BE TALKING ABOUT AS A VIOLATION WAS THE POSSIBILITY OF THE CUTOFF OF FUEL, NOT THE ISSUE OF FUEL STORAGE. THIS SEEMS BORNE OUT BY HIS STATEMENT THAT "WE HAVE, THEREFORE, TO FIND OUT ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF WORKING AND IF IT DOES NOT HAPPEN, I CANNOT GIVE MY SELF-RESPECT AND CONTINUE IT." THERE IS, OF COURSE, NOTHING NEW IN THE POSITION THAT US FAILURE TO PROVIDE ENRICHED URANIUM AS CALLED FOR IN THE TARAPUR AGREEMENT WOULD CONSTITUTE A VIOLATION OF THAT AGREEMENT.

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4. AAT THE VERY END OF THE EXCHANGE, AFTER A MEMBER HAD EXPRESSED HIS CONFUSION OVER DESIA'S EARLIER ANSWER (BECAUSE IT SEEMED TO HIM, AS IT DOES TO US, TO REFER TO FUEL SUPPLY AND NOT FUEL STORAGE), THE PM RETURNED TO THE STORAGE ISSUE. BUT HE DID THIS IN A MUCH Milder AND LESS SPECIFIC FASHION. THE IAEC, HE SAID, HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO FIND WAYS AND MEANS BY ITSELF TO USE UP THE SPENT FUEL OR DISPOSE OF IT. "THAT WE HAVE TO DO WITH THE AMERICANS' AID. THEY HAD AGREED TO GIVE IT, BUT NOW THEY ARE NOT DOINT IT."
GOHEEN

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